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ON THE STANDARDIZATION OF
GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES
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REPORTS BY DIVISIONS AND GOVERNMENTS ON THE SITUATION IN THEIR REGIONS AND COUNTRIES AND ON THE PROGRESS MADE IN THE STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES SINCE THE FIFTH CONFERENCE

Report of New Zealand

Paper submitted by New Zealand**

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BACKGROUND

The New Zealand Geographic Board, constituted under the New Zealand Geographic Board Act 1946, is the authority responsible for geographical place names in New Zealand. The Minister of Survey and Land Information is responsible for the Act.

The Act makes provision for the board to assign or alter a geographic name of any place in New Zealand. The term "place" is defined as being any town, village, special settlement, goldfield or mining district, any land area or other district, place or locality (not being the district, ward or riding of a territorial authority); any railway or railway station; any post office; any mountain, peak, hill, pass, valley, glen , forest, lagoon, swamp, creek, stream, river, ford, lake, bay, harbour, or other natural feature whatsoever.

Excluded from its authority is the naming of territorial authorities and their districts (under the authority of the Local Government Commission); streets and roads (under the authority of Territorial Local Authorities); national parks and reserves (under the authority of the Department of Conservation); and the name of the country, which would require an Act of Parliament.

The Surveyor-General is the permanent chairman of the board and secretarial and technical support is provided by the Department of Survey and Land Information.

Membership of the board include:

- The Surveyor-General (Chairman ex Officio)
- Two persons appointed as representative of the Maori Race
- One person nominated by the NZ Geographical Society
- One person nominated by the Federated Mountain Clubs of NZ
- Two persons nominated on the recommendation of the Minister of Survey and Land Information (one of which is usually the Secretary of Internal Affairs because of his affiliations with territorial local authorities).

The Hydrographer of the Royal New Zealand Navy has been nominated by the board to advise on naming in New Zealand's territorial waters. An Antarctic adviser has also been enlisted to provide specialist advice to help the board fulfil its role as New Zealand's Antarctic Place Names Authority.

The general functions of the New Zealand Geographic Board are:

(a) to adopt rules of orthography and nomenclature in respect of geographic place names in New Zealand;

(b) to examine cases of doubtful spelling of place names, and determine the spelling to be adopted on official maps;

(c) to investigate and determine the priority of the discovery of any geographic features;

(d) to collect original Maori place names for recording on official maps;

(e) to determine what alien names appearing on official maps should be replaced by Maori or British names;

(f) subject to the provisions of the Act, to investigate and determine any proposed alteration of a place name;

(g) to make inquires and recommendations on any matters referred to it by the Minister.

NATIONAL PROGRAMME

The board task of assigning and altering place names is an ongoing one and in recent years the board has found that its workload has tripled. This has been the result of the board's much more public profile and an increasing public awareness of, and desire to preserve, New Zealand's cultural heritage.

To give an indication of the ratio of Maori place names to European place names in New Zealand, a sample count of nearly 3,000 geographical features on the 1:1,000,000 series of maps revealed that in the North Island 21% were European names and 79% were Maori names while in the South Island 67% of names were European and 33% Maori Names.

Maori Oral History Atlas and Handbook

In 1990 as its contribution to New Zealand's sesquicentennial commemoration of the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi the board published a Maori Oral History Atlas and a small companion booklet on Understanding Maori Place Names. Respected Maori scholar Mrs Te Aue Davis was contract to produce the Atlas which details eleven groups of Maori place names which are linked together in traditional stories and recorded on an "oral" map.

Original Maori Place Names Project

Mrs Davis has also been employed to set up a network with the local Maori elders and tribal authorities to collect information on original Maori place names in order to fulfil the board's statutory requirement to collect original Maori names for recording on official maps.

Names from the Maori Oral History Atlas and the Original Place Names Project will be stored in the Department of Survey and Land Information's New Zealand place names database on which New Zealand's National Gazetteer is also held. New names, changes in spelling, and the addition of macrons and word divisions identified in the project will be reviewed by the board and where necessary put through the formal procedures to assign or alter a place name.

National Gazetteer and Place Names Database

The national gazetteer and place names database resides on a Vax 8300 VMS computer system in a RDB database management system (DBMS). The national gazetteer has been compiled from the imperial inch to the mile NZMS 1 topographic maps and location information has been mathematically converted into the sheet layout of the 1:50,000 Infomap 260 metric maps. The gazetteer contains over 50,000 individual feature names. The gazetteer is available to the public in paper print-out form, on disk or on microfiche. Currently names capture is being taken directly from the Infomap 260 maps by computerised digital capture. This will give the gazetteer a far greater locational accuracy.

For those Infomap 260's captured, provision has also been made to identify Geographic Board approved names and gazette references. An indicator has also been added to identify names of European or Maori origin. Names showing on the NZMS 1 series and not on the Infomap 260 series and vice versa are being identified and investigated.

International Place Names Conferences

In November 1990 the New Zealand Geographic Board and Department of Survey and Land Information held a South Pacific Place Names Conference. It was a first attempt at bringing together a body of experts of various disciplines to discuss the need for recognition of and research into Maori place names and the cultural links between Maori place names and the range of names found in the Pacific Ocean area.

New Zealand has also increased its profile in the international place names arena. Previously a non-active member of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) United Kingdom Division, New Zealand was accepted as a member of the UNGEGN Asia South-East and Pacific South-West Division in 1990. In 1991 New Zealand took over the chairmanship of the division and will host the next UNGEGN Asia South-East and Pacific South-West Division meeting to be held in Wellington on 29-30 September 1992. The Department of Survey and Land Information has also taken over responsibility for the UNGEGN divisional projects and is currently working on a 1:10,000,000 place names map of the UNGEGN Asia South-East and Pacific South-West Division.

Changes in Toponymic Guide-lines

As the result of recommendations that came out of the South Pacific Place Names Conference the board has adopted, in principle, two significant changes in the presentation of Maori place names. The first is the use of the macron to indicate long vowel length. The second is the implementation of word division in Maori place names. Past practice has been to compound words together. Both these initiatives have been endorsed by the Maori Language Commission and will greatly assist the correct pronunciation and identification of the meaning of Maori place names. Information on the placement of macrons and word division will be collected as part of the Original Maori Place Names Project. Implementation will be gradual and considered on a case by case basis so it will be some time before these initiatives appear on official maps. New computer equipment is also needed to be able to implement the macron as this is not a standard feature of keyboards in New Zealand.

Antarctic Place Names Policy

A managed approach towards Antarctic place naming is being undertaken. The model for that approach is as follows. The New Zealand Geographic Board works in conjunction with the United States of America's Advisory Committee on Antarctic Names (ACAN). Both bodies receive Antarctic place name submissions. These are assessed according to each bodies own rules of nomenclature and on approval they are then submitted to the other country for wider consideration and approval or alteration if any name is at issue.

The New Zealand Geographic Board's general policy guide-line to submitters of Antarctic place names is "That Antarctic names [should] be descriptive or cover Antarctic activity and history or reflect New Zealand's culture and society."

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

The Original Maori Place Names Project is a major long term project and will take some years to complete.

Other initiatives being undertaken by the New Zealand Geographic Board and the Department of Survey and Land Information include a comprehensive review of the board's current rules of nomenclature and other toponymic guide-lines. Consideration is also being given to updating the hardware and software on which New Zealand's national gazetteer and place names database is held.

Funding is also being sought by the New Zealand Geographic Board to publish historical maps of the North Island and the South Island at 1:1,000,000 which will be wholly expressed in Maori and will illustrate Maori place names circa 1840.